

March 10, 2015

Dear Judge Madeline Hughes Haikala,

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter concerning teachers' children transfers in Huntsville City Schools. My name is James Davis, and my wife is a teacher at Jones Valley Elementary. She has taught at Jones Valley Elementary since 2003, and we have expected to enroll our daughter at Jones Valley Elementary since she was born. [REDACTED], my four year old, will be ready for kindergarten in one year. I never once imagined that she would not be allowed to attend the school in which my wife teaches. This has been a great source of worry and concern for my family and has affected many decisions in the last year. This worry seems so unnecessary, especially when teachers' children transfers would be a very small percentage of the population at each school.

My family and I live north of New Market, Alabama in a small community called Plevna. My wife's family has owned a small farm in this community for over fifty years. We are currently living beside my in-laws and my wife's 95 year old grandfather. Her father was recently diagnosed with an incurable blood disease. They depend on us to help take care of the land and farm animals. From time to time, her father is hospitalized and we take care of her grandfather then too. It is not an option for my family to simply move to the Huntsville City School district. I write all of this to explain that not being able to bring my daughter to Jones Valley Elementary would be an incredible hardship to my family.

There are several dilemmas if our daughter were to go to her zoned school (New Market Elementary). First, we would not be able to take [REDACTED] to school each morning. I leave at 6:30 a.m. to be at work by 7:00 a.m. My wife also needs to leave by 6:30 a.m. to arrive at Jones Valley Elementary in a timely manner for daily preparation, parent conferences, and morning duties. I could not, nor would I want to drop her off at elementary school at 6:45 a.m. every day. We would be forced to find someone and pay them to keep her every morning from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. and make sure she gets to school on time. After school care would also be required until we could drive 30 miles from Huntsville to New Market to pick her up. So please consider if [REDACTED] was in her home school, she would be in the care of at least three different people (before school, during school, after school) for about 12 hours.

If my daughter is enrolled at her zoned school or at a private school, it will limit my wife's ability to invest in any extracurricular activities for Huntsville City Schools. She would not be able to volunteer for after school clubs such as Student Council. With a child enrolled at another school, it would be difficult for my wife to attend PTA meetings and events at a Huntsville City School. As parents of an elementary student, we would invest our time and energy to the school in which [REDACTED] attended.

My wife and I are considering enrolling [REDACTED] in a private school in Huntsville so that she can be closer to our places of work. This alleviates some of the concerns stated above but places a financial burden on our family. We would pay over \$5,000 a year for her education in a private school just 8 minutes away from Jones Valley Elementary. I know it would be best for her to stay at the school in which she begins her education, makes friendships, and develops a sense of community. I certainly want to do what is best for my daughter, but this will come at a tremendous financial cost for our family.

To be honest, I'm not sure how we would be able to afford this long-term, extra cost. We are currently making sacrifices to pay for her education in private preschool instead of the low cost, very affordable pre-k program available at her zoned school or the free program at Jones Valley Elementary. One sacrifice includes renting a mobile home instead of building a house for our family.

I hope you can understand how this decision affects our family. My wife has been fully committed to the children and parents at Jones Valley Elementary for over ten years. She spends countless hours at night and on the weekends to ensure a quality education for these children. If our child attends a different school, she would not be able to continue the level of involvement that she has exhibited in years past. My wife would love to have the opportunity to bring our child to this school where she can be involved in her education, volunteer for activities and fieldtrips, and support her education like so many parents do every day. Parent involvement makes a difference in the life of a child and in the school community. I am simply asking for the same opportunity for our child. Not allowing teachers' children to transfer to the parent's place of work is not a good decision for Huntsville City Schools especially since it is such a small percentage of the total school population. Please consider this situation as you review the transfer policy and make teachers' children transfers a priority in Huntsville City Schools.

Sincerely,

James Davis